

Prepositions



A preposition adds additional, often essential information to a sentence such as direction, location, or time. It can be a single word or a group of words that shows the relationship between elements in a sentence, usually nouns, pronouns, or noun phrases. This handout provides some general concepts associated with prepositions, but it is not meant to be comprehensive explanation of their functions.

Direction and Location

Prepositions can be used to indicate direction or location, including place or position.

Examples: The campsite is *across* the river. (location)
Samantha is waiting *in front of* the library. (location)
She enjoyed walking *through* the park. (direction)

Time

Prepositions can refer to specific aspects of time such as clock time, periods of the day, dates, days of the week, months, and seasons of the year.

Examples: We will meet *after* lunch.
She cried *on* Tuesday.

Other Uses

Prepositions can also be used to indicate or illustrate relationships and build context.

Examples: They were good students *except for* their math skills.
Josh is *about* six feet tall.
He won't go *without* his mom.

Common Prepositions

This chart gives a list of common prepositions, which are organized by their function.

| Location | Direction | Time | Other |
|----------|-----------|--------|-----------|
| above | on | after | about |
| across | opposite | at | as |
| behind | out (of) | before | at |
| beyond | outside | by | by |
| by | over | during | except |
| between | around | for | for |
| down | through | from | from |
| from | to | in | like |
| in | towards | on | of |
| inside | under | since | with |
| near | up | until | without |
| on | from | around | including |

Commonly Confused Prepositions (*in*, *on*, and *at*)

Some commonly confused prepositions are *in*, *on*, and *at*, especially as they relate to place and time. Often these prepositions express a range from **general to specific** as shown in the following examples related to time:

In is used for broader timeframes such as **parts of the day, months, years, and seasons**.

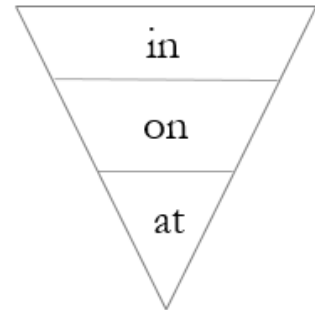
Examples: She likes to read *in* the evening.
We will go *in* June.
It happened *in* 2011.
The snow falls *in* winter.

On is used to indicate a more specific timeframe such as **a date or day**.

Examples: She was born *on* October 4th.
They were married *on* Saturday.

At is used to refer to **a specific time**.

Examples: We will meet them *at* noon.
Dinner is *at* 6:00p.m.



The same pattern of general to specific applies to using *at*, *on*, and *in* **in relation to location**:

In is typically used to refer to larger geographical locations such as **towns, cities, or countries**.

Examples: He knows a lot of people *in* Provo.
Kathy lives *in* Atlanta.
His family lives *in* Brazil.

On is often used for describing a more specific location such as a **street, avenue, island, or surface**.

Examples: William lives *on* Clark Street.
The book is *on* the table.

At is generally used to describe an exact location such as an **address or exact spot**.

Examples: Let's meet *at* Stephanie's house.
He was at home when she called.

Commonly Confused Prepositions (*from* and *of*)

From and *of* are also commonly confused prepositions.

From is used to indicate **the origin or starting point of something**.

Examples: Josh is *from* Idaho.
She borrowed the book *from* the library.
Sam went *from* Utah to Montana.

Of is used to indicate **possession or relationship with something**.

Examples: She was the owner *of* the car.
Marissa is the daughter *of* Susan and Michael.

Additional Information

Choosing the correct preposition can be difficult. Many prepositions are commonly combined with certain words, and these groups of words, or *collocations*, often require memorization. To strengthen your understanding of prepositions, pay attention to how prepositions are used in the texts you read, develop and memorize a list of frequently used prepositions and collocations, and use Google or a dictionary to identify the common use of individual prepositions.